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THE CATHOLICITY OF PROTESTANTISM.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

GRACE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE, MAY 11th, 1884,

BY THE

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BEING A REPLY TO A SERMON ON THE DIVISIONS OF THE CHURCH,
PREACHED BY MONSEIGNEUR CAPEL, IN THE ROMAN
CATHEDRAL, OF PHILADELPHIA,
APRIL 13, 1884.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

WILMINGTON, DEL.:
THE JAMES & WEBB PRINTING COMPANY.
1884.

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"By their fruits ye shall know them."—Matthew VII, 20.

For several months past a widely known Roman Catholic priest, of high rank, has been lecturing and preaching in our leading cities upon a variety of themes distinctly pertinent to his denominational faith. He has been courteously received and patiently heard by Romanists and Protestants alike. On last Easter Sunday, however, he addressed, in the papal cathedral of Philadelphia, an audience which was said to number five thousand persons, upon a subject that immediately concerns Protestant Christianity and the religious life and honor of every Protestant Christian. A synopsis of his sermon appeared the next day in *The Philadelphia Press*, which, with your leave, I will read:

"Christians are broken up into all kinds of divisions. The present state of Christianity is a scandal. Early Christians loved one another. To-day they seem rather to hate each other. As you walk the streets of Philadelphia you perceive temple after temple erected to the Living God, each held by widely different sects, but all professing to teach the same kind of Christianity. Yet these churches have no charity, the one for the other, and in them the teaching of how to gain the one great end, salvation, is given in as many different ways as there are buildings. The extreme hatred manifested for each other by these churches is the bitterest that is known in history. How deplorable it is that there should be these divisions. Suppose at this moment that Methodist, and Presbyterian, and Baptist, and Episcopalian and Catholic were united in one band against the evils of the day—against the surging sea of infidelity—would it not, I ask, be of the greatest good for Christianity? What power would there be that the Church would not have if it were firmly united?

Now our blessed Lord came to earth propounding one faith, one Book and one method by which that faith and that Book were to be sustained. But to-day men announce varying theories of faith, and

varying theories of the method by which that faith is to be sustained. It is wrong. Men cannot proclaim different doctrines of religion and then assert that they are emanations from God. The whole of the Gospel of Christ and the whole of our common sense teach us that there can be but one body and one theory of Christianity, as there is but one God, one faith and one Book. What were the duties of the disciples when told, "Go teach all nations?" What did they have to do but to teach that which they had learned from Christ? It was this and nothing else. Jesus Christ formed, while on earth, a teaching body, or corporate authority, that was to teach His Word, and was to continue through their followers through all time. The Unity of God thus proclaimed a unity of faith, of hope, of salvation—a unity of Church.

How happens it then that the God-ordained unity is divided? The painful answer is that there has been a revolt against the teachings of Christ. Ignorance, too, has contributed to the division. Other things men may learn and learn well, but theology they learn little of. Uneducated, illiterate men "expound" the Scriptures, each on his own theory. Separate religious bodies are formed. They have their government and their management and each regards itself as the true Christian Church. What is to be done to remedy this state of things? I answer, first, prayer—not by some alone, but by all; then, a study of fundamental questions. On truth there can be no compromise. Obedience to the dictates of conscience, which abhors hatred and division, and the search for truth which will clear away misunderstandings and doubt, must in the end show bare the errors of the past and lead to a union of the now antagonized elements of Christ's Church. God left on earth a single church with a single head of authority. Where is that head to-day? That is the question, the solution of which leads to unity. And the solution, I reiterate, is found, first in fervent prayer to God; next in fidelity to the voice of conscience, and then in the study of those truths of history which prove the authority of the Church, in the expressed outward form of the Pope as the vicegerent of God."

I am aware that newspaper reports, especially newspaper reports of sermons, are often conspicuously inexact, but this one states so fairly the well known view of the Roman church on the question of Christian Unity, that I feel justified in accepting it as a substantially accurate epitome of the distinguished prelate's remarks, and a representative utterance of his church on that subject.

Strictures such as these are not new. From the day that Bossuet published his "Variations of the Protestant Churches," in 1687, they have formed a popular weapon in the hands of Roman controversialists. It is high time they were examined and their authors called to account. Before noticing them, however, I beg to state, what most of you already know, that I have no personal taste for disputation. I have no quarrel with any man or any sect. Nor have I any experience of the sentiment of bigotry. I believe my spirit to be entirely tolerant and truly catholic. It is far more agreeable to me to join hands with men who bear the Lord's name, and assist them in carrying the gospel forward, than to lift my voice against theirs in ecclesiastical strife. Were it possible, I would sheathe the polemical sword and banish it forever from the pulpit to the archives of an outlived age. But just such words as I have cited, reiterated as they have been for two centuries by papal disputants, make this impracticable. They constitute a direct and unwarranted assault upon the most prevalent and intelligent form of Christian faith, and they were spoken in this instance by a representative man, in one of the most prominent Roman Catholic pulpits in this country, and to an audience, many of whom were, doubtless, Protestants. They impeach the spirit and life of Protestant Christianity. If they are true, Protestantism is discredited, and has not now, and has never had, an excuse for existence. To permit them to pass unchallenged, would be treachery to the history, the character, and the work of the reformed religion, and could be construed into a tacit confession of their truth. I have borne them in silence for an entire month in the hope that another than myself might give to them the answer they deserve. But so far as I know, they remain unnoticed by either the Protestant pulpit or press. I am constrained, therefore, by my sense of responsibility to the truth, to rise in my place this morning, and protest against these animadversions, in all and in severalty. In the name of the Protestant commonwealth I deny the charges of this Roman assailant, in whole and in part, and reject the doctrinal principle on which he demands the dissolution of Protestant Christianity, and the re-establishment of papal supremacy in the Christian world.

Your attention is invited, first, to his errors of fact. The

learned prelate cites by name the great Protestant denominations, and declares of them that "they hate each other;" that "they have no charity the one for the other;" that "the extreme hatred manifested for each other by these churches, is the bitterest that is known in history;" and that their doctrines of salvation are as numerous as are their denominational edifices. Now, these are distinct and unqualified allegations. They affirm an absolutely scandalous situation; and they pledge their author, and the church he represents, to the charge, that here in America, and among Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Baptist Christians, the spirit of religious unity is utterly lost, and that sectarian hatred reigns in its stead. They go further, and challenge history to produce a parallel for these shocking animosities; and by implication assert, that even the remorseless hatred that inspired the orator's own church in other generations to feed its inquisitorial flames with the bodies of its victims, in every land in christendom, is not comparable to the cruel malignity with which we Protestants are now regarding each other.

These gross and unseemly charges, you observe, assail at once the spirit and the teachings of Protestantism. Let us bring them directly to the test of undisputed fact. Are these great churches at war with each other in spirit? Are they in fundamental disagreement on the doctrine of salvation?

To state these questions before an intelligent audience, is to give their answer, but you will pardon the citation of a few responsive facts. For sixty-eight years these churches have jointly sustained and managed, in this country, the American Bible Society. This is a purely unsectarian organization, whose business is the printing and circulation of the word of God, without note or comment. It is supported by the conjoint contributions of the various Protestant bodies, and is controlled by a board of management representing them all. It has printed the Bible in about two hundred and fifty languages, and publishes nearly seventeen hundred thousand copies of the Scriptures every year. Its income is nearly six hundred thousand dollars per annum, and it is now distributing its *fourth* general supply of Bibles to the people of this country. For a period approximating twenty years these churches have, through their denominational representatives,

united upon a plan of Sunday-school instruction. With great wisdom they have systematized the historical and doctrinal contents of the Bible, and arranged annual schemes of lessons that are, from week to week, carrying the youth of the whole Protestant world in company through a comprehensive course of Bible study. This plan concentrates the thought of the Bible students of Protestantism upon specific truth, and gives the simultaneous diffusion of its influence upon all our young people. For forty years, these same churches, and their Protestant compeers, have voluntarily maintained an association known as the Evangelical Alliance. This fraternity is constituted upon the basis of the evangelical faith of Protestantism; it is represented by fifty or more distinct religious bodies of white and colored Christians, and has its branches throughout the civilized world. It bears on its rolls the names of many of the greatest theologians and noblest spirits of this century, and its meetings bring together the representative thought and piety of all the churches, for prayer and consultation upon the great problems of universal religion, and excite spiritual influences that reach the whole Protestant commonwealth, and are felt over all the globe. During the same period, these churches have created the Young Men's Christian Association, a society, also unsectarian, which purposes, as its name indicates, the moral and religious improvement of young men. To-day it has its reading-rooms and prayer-circles in every great city, and numbers its auxiliaries in Europe and America by the thousand, and its members by the hundred thousand. It is reaching and influencing for good, millions of souls, and has, perhaps, accomplished more for the moral culture of young men, than any uninspired organization that ever existed. Under the moral influence of one of these unsectarian associations, these representative bodies of Protestantism unite at the dawn of each new year in a "Week of Prayer," during which, in their several places of worship, or in devout union services, they join in special invocation of the divine blessing upon all Christian people and all Christian work. These churches also unite in the maintenance of all local charities and in the prosecution of every moral reform. Their missionary labors in the great fields of earth are performed side by side and in perfect harmony and fellowship. The volumes of their several authors are found in all their publishing houses,

and the columns of their periodical press are often a symposium of fraternal thought in which their best spirits meet in brotherly converse. Their communicant members intermingle daily in the fraternities of social life, and not infrequently in the sublimer fellowship of Christian brotherhood at the sacramental table. Their great assemblies greet each other by message and messenger as brethren beloved, and in all lines of practical Christianity they are allied togther in a grand commonwealth of good will in which denominational names are well nigh forgotten in catholicity of spirit and unity of heart.*

Nor are there, as the prelate alleges, elemental divergencies of faith beneath this peaceful exterior. These churches, having their own methods and incidental peculiarities, yet stand upon a common doctrinal ground. Their great text-books teach the same fundamental truths, and essentially agree upon the facts of universal human sin, human redemption in the death of Jesus Christ, and the call of the gospel to men to attain to salvation by personal repentance towards God and faith in the crucified Redeemer. Their congregations accept and sing the same songs of salvation, based on these doctrines, and their ministers hold up the same cross, plead the same love, and point out the same way of life. In proof of this essential doctrinal unity of Protestantism, the ministers of these churches (with a single exception) are freely invited into and are heard from each other's pulpits, and even pass at times from one church to another without serious personal or doctrinal discredit.

Do these things savor of "hatred" and "uncharity?" Do they bear out our assailant's charge of doctrinal antagonisms and contradictions in teaching? I submit that they demonstrate the existence of undisturbed peace throughout Protestantism. They proclaim not a "bitterness" unparalleled in history, but an unexampled fellowship and unity. They are the very realization of the

* In further illustration of this spirit I may be permitted to quote the following words from a published report of a sermon by the Rev. George Dana Boardman, D. D., pastor of the First Baptist Church, of Philadelphia, delivered May 18, 1884, with reference to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, then in session in that city. "The Methodist Church is beyond all others the Church of the highways and hedges, the skirmish line of the Church militant. Let us then wish them God-speed in their grand enterprises for the emancipation of the world. And while we sincerely believe that ours is the Scriptural baptism we know that there is the better baptism of the Holy Spirit, in which we all believe and are partakers."

idea of Christian brotherhood! They exhibit the Protestant commonwealth as a well attuned harp, whose tense and separate strings of denominational life, chord in perfect harmony, and, swept by the hand of God, give forth richest strains of peace and love! There is no discordant element in the life of Protestantism. Ecclesiastical quietude and fellowship are universal within its borders. And yet this stranger priest arises in the city of Brotherly Love, before five thousand people, and under the shadow of these co-operating churches, and with the evidences of their brotherhood all about him, and the melody of Easter joys in his ears, wrathfully waves his clenched hands above their calm and beautiful life, and cries out that they hate each other with the bitterest animosity known in history, and that they live only to contradict each other on questions of fundamental faith! How shall the author of such slanders be characterized? Is he malignant, or is he only ignorant? If he speaks intelligently, he has forfeited the attention of honorable men! If in ignorance, he owes Protestant Christianity a public apology, and the expiation of subsequent silence.

Please notice, secondly, and more especially, the doctrinal principle which our critic advances for the correction of these imaginary evils. He declares that the dismemberment of the church, which he fancies is illustrated by Protestantism, has been caused by "a revolt against the teachings of Christ," and pronounces its cure to be a prayerful study "of those truths of history which prove the authority of the church in the expressed outward form of the pope, as the vicegerent of God." That is to say, the teachings of Christ and the lessons of history require the universal church to be a universal sect, and that sect the papacy. I respectfully dissent from both propositions, and submit,

First, that "the teachings of Christ" do not authorize any such claim. The attention of the learned prelate is called to the radical distinction between *unity* and *uniformity*, in eclesiastical history. The church of Christ is necessarily and essentially one and indivisible, its unity inhering in its common union with himself, and is composed of the whole body of the invisible and visible host that shall finally be gathered together with him in his kingdom. This unity is spiritual, its basis being faith, and its evidence personal righteousness. Uniformity, on the other hand, is

mere agreement in external polity, or method, for purposes of defense, convenience, or aggression, and is accidental and not essential. The Scriptures furnish us with two examples of ecclesiastical organization, in one of which both these qualities are present, while the second exhibits but one of them. The ancient Jewish Church was an experiment that combined unity and uniformity. Its basis was spiritual union in Christ through faith in the promises of God, and corporate conformity in method under a visible head. And this principle was wrought out with the most patient and elaborate detail. The nation was separated under it to perpetual exclusiveness. A high priesthood was appointed that provided for an unbroken succession. The sign of the covenant was given and a splendid commemorating and adumbrative ritual was established,—all by the careful and express revelation of God. And under that imposing ecclesiasticism unity and uniformity were made essential qualities of the experiment, and were, together, perpetuated until its end was accomplished. Can any one believe that Christ intended the continuance of this method in the Christian commonwealth? Did he, who declared himself to be the fulfillment of all the law and the prophets, who became by his sacrifice upon the cross the everlasting high-priest of his church, who carried his priestly office into the heavens in his own personality, and who never by any act of ordination conferred that office upon another, be presumed to have established or purposed a human vicegerency for the new dispensation? He nowhere instituted such a prelacy. On the contrary, he declared his establishment of a spiritual kingdom on earth, in the hearts of believers. He conferred upon his Apostles authority to proclaim that kingdom to all the world. He promised not to elevate Peter to the primacy of the Christian church, but to send the *Holy Ghost* to be the spiritual head of his spiritual kingdom. His own redemptive office was its corner-stone, and upon this rock he built his church. And on the day of Pentecost he fulfilled his word, and the Divine Spirit baptizing the waiting believers, assumed his unrivalled and perpetual sovereignty in the visible church of God.

So the Apostles understood him, and went forth over the nations, not to establish a new ecclesiastical hierarchy, but to call

men from temple and synagogue and academy and highway to spiritual life, and to proclaim the broad doctrine that "as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, *are one body in Christ*, and every one members one of another." The form of government that appeared under them was simple, natural, and liberal. It presented no attempt either to perpetuate the Jewish forms or to supplant them with a new system of conformity. It named no succession either of bishop or council. It suggested no law of uniformity, or if it did, history is absolutely silent upon the subject. The New Testament church was at the farthest remove from such a principle. It insisted upon spiritual unity only, and yielded the largest liberty in all else. The Roman sectarianism can neither prove its doctrine, nor claim its authority from the Scriptures. Its hierarchical system is derived, not from Christ, or his Apostles, but from the Roman Empire. It found its prototype in the magnificent fabric of the Roman constitution, and built up its colossal usurpation in an ambitious attempt to enthrone a spiritual Cæsar in the empire of the Son of God!

Clearly, then, it is not the non-conformity of Protestantism that has constituted a "revolt against the teachings of Christ," but the effort on the part of the church of Rome to force upon the Christian communion a principle that Christ permitted to perish with Judaism.

But I affirm, secondly, that the lessons of history no less than "the teachings of Christ" utterly refute the papal claim of uniformity. The Roman church, has, itself, given us an example of its principle of universal sectarianism. Between the publication of the edict of toleration by Constantine and the utterance of the Augsburg Confession, more than twelve centuries intervened. During all that prolonged period the papal power ruled the western world. The bishop of Rome was supreme, and the experiment of uniformity was carried to its completion. The results are before all mankind. What do they show? This is the one remaining feature of the problem before us, and I very respectfully invite the attention of the eloquent Roman prelate and his sympathizers, to its exhibit.

The experiment of papal domination during those twelve hundred years resulted in, at least, four great historic facts.

First, it created a vast, iniquitous, and wholly secularized ecclesiasticism. So soon as the Roman See became the centre of the new state religion, it began a career of aggrandizement and conquest. The government of the church was patterned upon that of the state. Immense revenues poured in upon it from imperial donatives, personal bequests, and the tithing system. Vast properties, and, subsequently, the principality of the papal states, were acquired. A splendid establishment was organized about the pope, representatives of which appeared at every great European court. Soldiers were marshaled in his name and under his banners. An enormous patronage was controlled by him. The doctrines of infallibility, and of the superiority of the spiritual over the secular arm of society, were announced and enforced, until, under Hildebrand, the Roman pontiff came to be recognized and feared as the most formidable power in the politics of Europe. He became the tireless instigator of war. He usurped authority over the state as well as the church, and kings trembled before the threat of his anathemas. Men like Charlemagne, after bringing Europe to their feet, were constrained to accept their crowns from his hands. Men like Henry IV., of Germany, condescended to make their humiliating pilgrimages to his palace, and stood without his doors in midwinter, bare-foot, and clad only in hair-cloth for three days, that they might receive his tardy pardon. Men like Charles V. and Phillip II., lived but to fight his battles and extend his usurpations. Contumacious sovereigns like Elizabeth, of England, and Henry, of Navarre, found themselves deposed by his edicts, and their subjects absolved under the sanctions of his authority from civil allegiance to them. And councils, like that of Trent, confirmed to him these supreme prerogatives. His iron sceptre touched and withered every form of power, crushed out of Europe the very spirit of liberty, and inaugurated a millennium of woe, the effects of which are not yet wholly outlived. The papal throne became the glittering prize of unholy ambition. Men thirsting with the basest passions of the human soul struggled in frenzy for its possession. Intrigues, conspiracies, and murders, were the notorious means employed to secure it, and a succession of men came to the pontifical chair, whose hearts were black with sin, whose hands were red with

blood, and whose lives were polluted with lechery. The papal court became the most corrupt in Europe, and the record of the popes the most shameful in history.

And the demoralization extended outward through the entire system. Papal legates were the political intriguers, as they were the ecclesiastical despots of their time. The papal councils were types of inhuman legislation. Papal Orders were the spies and emissaries of an insane fanaticism. Bishops were often soldiers, and oftener voluptuaries. Priests were prodigies of ignorance and rapacity, multitudes of them living in open lewdness, and some even maintaining harems. Convents were bestialized, and churches were temples of paganized rites and fabulous superstitions. The whole religious world was secularized, perverted, and enslaved!

Such, in the sad light of history, was one of the ultimate results of the principle of Roman sectarianism.

A second distinct effect of it was the destruction of the religious life of the world. Under the development of the papal system faith succumbed to superstition, and superstition grew to incredible proportions The ruin of the popular religious character is traceable no less to the pernicious preaching of the church, than to its vicious example. "Abstruse and fanatical explanations of Scripture," says Ruter, "bewildered the imaginations of the multitude; and Christianity was defended, not by the invincible arm of simplicity and truth, but by the glittering and brittle weapons of sophistry and invective." Stories of saints and martyrs superseded the story of the cross, and the craze for holy relics began. The true cross was discovered, the burial places of the early fathers were miraculously revealed, bones of the confessors were collected, and churches were erected as their mausoleums. Miracles were alleged of these substances, and the world went wild over them. Relic vendors arose and the church's most sacred possessions were these ghastly and decaying fragments. As an evidence of the extent to which this superstition grew, D'Aubigne relates that in the church of All Saints at Wittenburg, were shown a fragment of Noah's Ark, soot from the furnace of the Hebrew children, wood from the cradle of the infant Jesus, and nineteen thousand other relics more or less

precious. Monkery also sprang into existence, and the lands were overrun with the idle and illiterate hordes who practiced religion by flagellations, by dwelling in dens and caves, by perching upon pillars, or by following fanatical leaders upon desperate and heathenish crusades. The doctrines of purgatory, auricular confession and mariolatry, completed the victory of the church over the public conscience and intelligence, and spiritual life died out. A thousand years of darkness ensued. Letters perished, and the religious life of the European masses became a shocking compound of superstitious drivel and moral leprosy. And this was the second practical outcome of the papal supremacy.

Another effect of Roman domination was the practical loss to the church of the word of God. It is true that Jerome translated the Bible into the Latin tongue, and that Augustine produced a systematic treatment of the sacred word. But it is also true, that, with the growth of the papal power, the Book of God was substantially repudiated by the church. It was discredited by many of the more learned, and overwhelmed by canonical law, and thus made of non-effect by tradition. Some of the popes knew little of its contents, and others cared less for them. Dialectics took the place of theology, and Aristotle supplanted Jesus. The priests were for the most part grossly ignorant of the Scriptures and did not even pretend to teach them. The people were strangers to revelation, and were forbidden to read or to own the Bible without ecclesiastical permission. There are authentic passages on record that exhibit the representatives of the church as scornfully denying the Scriptures and cursing the languages in which they were written.

The result was, the Bible was dethroned and practically lost out of the church, through the treachery of the church itself, and when translators and publishers at length arose who insisted upon restoring the gospel to the benighted and perishing world, they were set upon by the hostile church, and hounded from land to land until they were overtaken and put to death, and their Bibles burned with them, as was done in the case of Tyndale; and when death interposed to screen them from the wrath of their foes, as it did in behalf of Wycliffe, these foes disinterred

and burned the very bones of the translator, in punishment. The well nigh incredible fact is established that the Roman church attempted to destroy the word of God, and, failing in this, carried death to the men who rescued it from the fate to which it had been consigned.

The fourth result to which I refer you is the church's spirit of persecution. This sect, the claims of which we are informed the lessons of history establish, and to whose bosom we are now urged to return in the interest of religious peace and love, is the mother of religious intolerance. I have already reminded you of the manner in which her spirit of persecution was brought to bear upon the princes of earth It remains for me to recall the exhibitions of that spirit towards society at large. The church of Rome early persuaded herself that dissent from her teachings was the highest of crimes, and that its punishment was her first duty. As early as the fifth century she published edicts which doomed to death those who ventured to question her dogmas. This spirit, which slumbered during the period of supineness to which her tyrannies reduced the world, broke forth in persecution whenever the human conscience dared to assert itself, and whetted the sword with which the church shed the blood of the generations for more than a thousand years. It leaped forth in the twelfth century, when Innocent III ordered the extermination of the Waldenses, and for five hundred years reddened the beautiful valleys of Piedmont with the life-blood of its victims. It culminated when the Spanish Inquisition extended itself to all the countries of Europe and for years kept the sky lurid with its martyr-fires. I need not detail its appalling cruelties. You remember the work of Torquemada in Spain, the "Blood Council" of Alva in the Netherlands, the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day in Paris, and the horrors of Smithfield in London. You remember the fate of Huss, of Bohemia, Jerome, of Prague, Savanarola, of Florence, and Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley of England. You remember Dominic, whose doctrine was, that it was a crime to keep faith with heretics, and Philip II, who condemned to the stake the entire population of the low countries. You remember the edicts of Charles V, re-enacted by his infamous son, which forbade birth, food, or burial itself, to all but

such as entered the world or departed from it through the church. You remember the *autos-da-fe*, which elevated murder into a kind of sacrament, and made a popular fete of human holocausts. And you remember the sanguinary wars which at length were necessary to quench these horrid fires, in seas of blood. They are scenes at which the heart sickens, and from which the eye turns away in tears. *But they are the full and final fruit of Roman Catholicism! The premeditated extermination of the non-conforming world, and supremacy by the sword, was her ultimate historic crime against God and man!* And for this, at last, she was gibbeted in history, and shorn of her perverted power by the providence of Almighty God.

Such are the achievements of the church of Rome! Such are the recorded results of this experiment of universal sectarianism, to the repetition of which we are now invited by this advocate of the dishonored church! What do you think of the proposition? Do you believe that the interests of religious peace and Christian love are to be subserved by a new trial of this experiment? Do you think the papal power has any claim to the respect of mankind? Do you agree that it becomes the representatives of that power to offer any criticism whatever of modern Protestantism, in the light of the lessons of papal history?

But, perhaps, you imagine that the spirit of Rome has changed, since her power has been broken. Wherein has she changed? What edict has she revoked? What apology has she made? From what position has she receded? I tell you, the church of Rome is the one institution on earth that never changes. She claims infallibility and cannot change. "If you had been pope" a literary admirer once said to the French statesman Gambetta, "you would have revolutionized Roman Catholicism." "Oh, no," replied that acute observer, "that would be quite impossible, *for the pope can reform nothing.* If I were pope, and attempted reforms, *I should die a very sudden death*, and a wiser pope would succeed me." The papacy is today in heart and spirit what it has been. Its paw, as extended by its prelate, is like velvet, but poor humanity bears but the scars of its fangs. Loosen the shackles that Protestantism has riveted upon that power, and it will again bury its teeth in the throat of the race, and require from all men submission or death.

But the story of the Roman usurpation is not the only history that bears upon this question. Protestantism has made a record that aids us in gathering the lessons which our critic invites us to ponder. The reformed religion is less than one-fifth the age of the papal church, but it has distinctly established its right to live, and the providential and beneficent tendencies of its influence. It has already borne abundant fruit, and that fruit is its final answer to these animadversions. I need, in conclusion, only to epitomize a few of its achievements, to perfect its case before the tribunal of your intelligence.

I remark, first, that Protestantism has dethroned and rendered hierarchical despotism hereafter impossible in the church. Its first great blow was at the presumptions of the papal throne. It exposed the monstrous iniquities and the amazing usurpations of the Roman system, and delivered society from them. It exploded the pernicious doctrine of human vicegerency in the church of God, and, with it, banished the mischievous heresy of the church's temporal power. Under its powerful assault Rome's hold on the human conscience was broken, and its power for cruelty was destroyed. Protestantism has abolished vicegerency, and has saved the church from its consequences. And its method renders the re-appearance of this evil impossible. Its theory of spiritual unity in the liberty of formal diversity, prevents, in its nature, the further assumption of ecclesiastical suzerainty, on the part of any man, or any body of men, and guarantees to the church, freedom from prelatical pretensions until the end of time. Rome can never re-assert the claim, and the genius of Protestantism prevents it from doing so. Therefore the doctrine of unity in non-conformity, is an essential triumph of Christianity and will be celebrated forever.

Again, Protestantism has re-asserted the Scriptures and given them their best interpretation. It has called the church back to the written Word, and has placed that Word in the vernacular of the people and in every man's hand. It has produced a race of Biblical expositors and has created a vast Biblical literature. It has specialized Bible study, through its great denominations, and has developed the purest knowledge of the written Word that the world has yet attained. Its great schools of theologic thought are

a check one upon the other and form the securest safeguard to faith that the church has ever known. Their teachings have revealed the intellectual basis of Christianity and have illumined the globe with the thoughts of God. They have led the race from the medieval superstitions into intelligent and final faith, and have restored the Bible to its original authority. And in this, Protestant Christianity has done a work that renders its presence indispensable and permanent among men.

So, also, it has developed a higher form of Christian character than it found. It has not only taught,—it has saved men. It has transformed the Christian ministry from an illiterate and immoral priesthood into a pure and able exponent of righteousness. It has scourged from the temple the hordes of traffickers who had dishonored its sacred courts with their diabolical commerce, and has made it "a place of prayer for all people." It has lifted the hearts of the masses from the veneration of saints and relics, to the love of Christ and the worship of God, and has saved the world from the profligacy of Romanism to something like morality and holiness. Protestantism has produced the noblest manhood, the purest womanhood,the happiest homes, and the most virtuous communities of history, and is to-day the patron of the world's best life. Its influence is a living inspiration to religion everywhere, and it is lifting the race "towards the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The modern Christian world is its trophy, and gladly recognizes it as the conservator of its blessings, and heathen nations are calling from all lands for its kindly offices. It is the necessary and appointed agency for the world's evangelization, and cannot be spared at the solicitation of an effete medievalism.

Moreover, Protestantism has produced the grandest organized Benevolences of the church. It is the founder of the Bible Societies which exist in all the great Protestant countries, and which have translated the Scriptures into the languages of nine-tenths of the inhabitants of the globe, and are publishing them by millions of copies annually. It is the creator of the Sunday-school which has an enrolled membership to-day of more than fourteen millions. It is the parent of modern Evangelical Missions which occupy at this time more than twenty thousand stations, employ forty-five thousand laborers, and embrace more

than one million communicants, and a Sunday-school population of between three and four millions. It is the author and defender of the Common School System, under which there are enrolled, in the United States alone, eight millions of youth. It is the patron, also. of Higher Education, and controls in this country two hundred and fifty-eight colleges, with more than sixty-three millions of dollars, and containing over twenty thousand students. It is the originator of the great Church Extension movement, through which one denomination, and that our own, is planting churches in destitute portions of our country at the rate of nearly "two a day;" and of the Freedmen's Aid movement which is educating and Christianizing the colored race of America, with unexampled success. And it is the inspirer of the beneficence that has provided Hospitals and Asylums for the suffering and destitute of society. Protestantism has filled the world with the exhibitions of its practical benevolence, and there is no race, or class of men, and no representative human want, that it has not relieved, by its unparalleled charities. It found the world filled with vast cathedrals that were shrines of mouldering relics and seats of a mummied faith; with schools that were centres of pagan philosophies and Roman superstitions; with monasteries that were homes of indolent and vagabond orders, and with tribunals that were carrying fire and sword to all nations; and it has built upon their ruins the magnificent structure of these benevolences. To men who were without hope it has brought the gospel; to youth who dwelt in godless ignorance it has given Christian education; upon the churchless it has bestowed the sanctuary; and for the persecuted it has conquered a final peace. It has revolutionized the religious life of mankind, and has given the world "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," in its stupendous achievements in Christian benevolence.

Finally, and as the result of all this, I affirm that Protestantism is the embodiment of the spirit of catholicity. What is catholicity? Is it uniformity in church life, compelled by intolerance? Is it coerced conscience shackled to the body of a dead faith? Is it supremacy by carnal power? Catholicity is the communion of human hearts in the love of Jesus Christ! Catholicity is the fellowship of salvation! Catholicity is the keeping of "the unity

of the spirit in the bond of peace!" Catholicity is the bond of divine life binding soul to soul in the love of God and the work of Christ! Catholicity is Christian liberty and enfranchisement for redeemed men in the Kingdom of God! *And Protestantism is Catholicity!* With absolute freedom of conscience and method, it is the guarantee of peace and good-will to all men, and the realization of the New Testament idea of the Christian commonwealth!

What can the dying Roman church offer to Protestantism? What has she to give us? Can *she* strengthen our brotherhood or enlarge our privileges? Can *she* contribute to Christian fraternity, or to the cause of humanity? Do we want to exchange the leadership of the Holy Ghost for the vicegerency of the Roman pope? No, forever no. Rome has no gift that the living church of God wants, or would accept. She is bankrupt, and outlived in influence. Her hands are empty and her heart is cold. Protestantism is far beyond and above her. She is medieval and not modern, and must be content to remain with her broken sceptre beside her, and the epitaph of her condemnation above her, in the sepulchre in which four centuries ago she was laid away forever.

I think it was the elder Cookman who was accustomed to compare the Protestant communion to a military establishment, with its various arms of service, and exhibit the infantry, the cavalry, and the artillery columns, all operating distinctly but harmoniously under one divine leader. I venture to commend the figure to our disturbed critic. The host that he imagines to be a riotous mob, is really a disciplined army full of *esprit de corps*. The sounds which he supposes are angry ejaculations, are, in fact, but the echoes of jubilant songs. The tremble which he fears is loosening the foundations of truth, is the tramp of the victorious hosts of the Lord. Let him accept the inevitable. These churches are marching to the conquest of the world. Their advance is resistless, for it is divinely led. The result is not remote. In the brightening morning it will come, and when it does, the crown of triumph which the papacy sacrificed for its carnal tiara, will descend upon their brows, and Protestant Christianity, then, as now, may commisserate, but must condemn, both the spirit and method of the unfaithful and rejected Roman church.